

## THE LATE BRONZE AGE HOARD FROM PEELHILL, STRATHAVEN, LANARKSHIRE

by J. M. COLES, M.A., PH.D., F.S.A., F.S.A.SCOT., and J. G. SCOTT, M.A., F.S.A.SCOT.<sup>1</sup>

### I. DISCOVERY

ON 1st March 1961 Mr N. Bryson, of the Townhead Printing Works, Strathaven, reported to Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum that he had been shown a socketed bronze spearhead found a few days previously during ploughing at Mr John Craig's farm at Peelhill, near Strathaven. Further enquiry revealed that the spearhead was not a solitary find, but might be part of a hoard. Mr R. B. K. Stevenson, of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, was informed, and arrangements were made with Mr Craig to investigate the site on Saturday, 4th March.<sup>2</sup>

Mr Craig showed that the spearhead, with other bronzes, had been recovered from a small basin-shaped hollow, not much more than 100 yds. across, in a glacial moraine which overlooked Peelhill farm steading some 300 yds. to the N., and commanded a wide view to the E. and N. over the valleys of the Glengavel and Avon Waters respectively (fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> The hollow had been a bog, which was in the final stages of reclamation for arable use. After draining, the area had been ploughed six years previously, and again in 1960. The wettest parts were being infilled with earth brought from elsewhere. It was evident that shrinkage and disturbance of the peat had eventually brought the bronzes of the hoard within reach of the plough, which had then scattered and sometimes exposed them. Mr Craig and his family had recovered a large number, and systematic search on 4th March succeeded in recovering several more, though it did not prove possible to determine the original position of the hoard. It was also clear from the plough furrows that some of the bronzes had been disturbed in the previous year's ploughing, though they had not then been detected. With the co-operation of Mr Craig and his family the contents of the hoard were reassembled, and since no further finds have been reported it may be assumed that most of the hoard has been recovered.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs L. A. Taylor, of Edinburgh University, took soil samples at the site, and these were analysed by Mr S. E. Durno, of the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research, Craigiebuckler, Aberdeen; Mr Durno also examined soil samples from spearheads 11, 14 and 23 (fig. 2: reports in Appendix). Remains of wooden shafts were re-

<sup>1</sup> Part I, describing the discovery of the hoard, is contributed by Mr Scott, Part II, the description and discussion, by Dr Coles.

<sup>2</sup> Those present were Dr H. Fairhurst, of Glasgow University, Mr A. H. Johnson, of the West of Scotland Agricultural College, Mr and Mrs J. G. Scott, Mr R. B. K. Stevenson and Mrs L. A. Taylor, of Edinburgh University. Thanks are due to Mr John Craig and members of his family for allowing investigation of the site and for help in recovering stray pieces from the hoard. A preliminary account of the find appeared in *Discovery and Excavation, Scotland* (1961), 37-38.

<sup>3</sup> Nat. Grid Ref. NS 644365. Height about 680 ft. above sea-level.

<sup>4</sup> Mr Stevenson took all appropriate steps to report the discovery to the Hamilton Estates, owners of the land, to the Procurator Fiscal of the Hamilton area, and to the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer. By courtesy of the latter the hoard has been on exhibition in Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum.

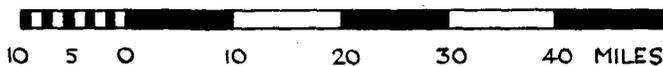
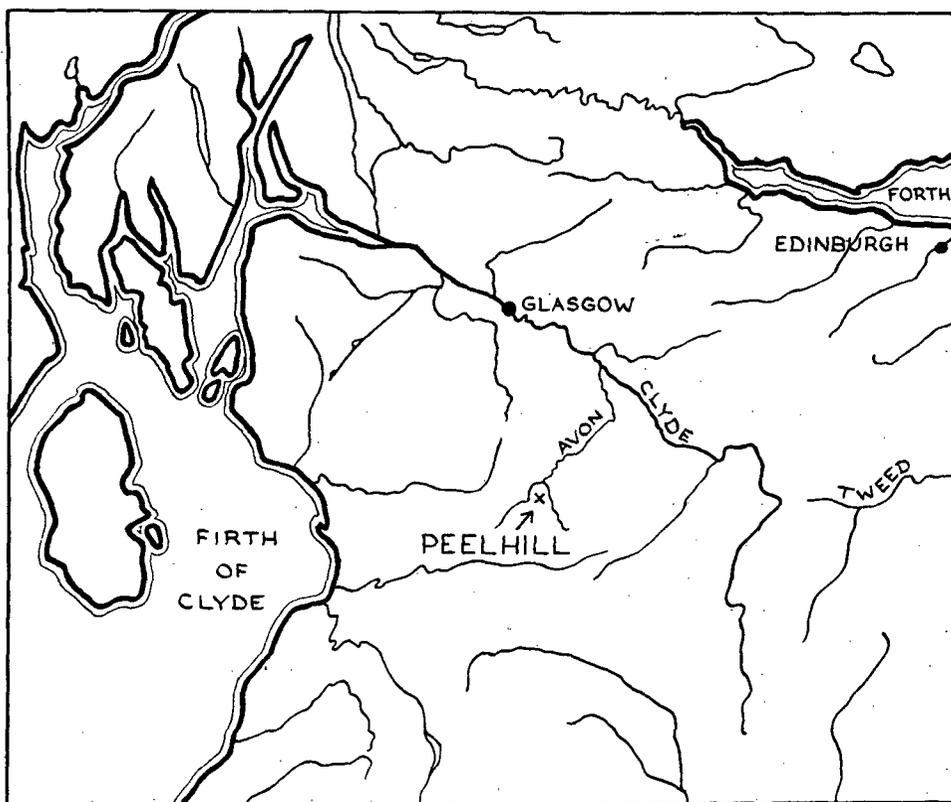


FIG. 1. Map

covered from spearheads 14, 23 and 28, and from the spearbutt or ferrule (fig. 2: 29). These were examined by Mr D. W. Brett, of the Department of Botany, Glasgow University, who found that ash was the wood used in all cases.<sup>1</sup> We are greatly indebted to Mrs Taylor and to Messrs Brett and Durno for their reports.

## II. DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION

The Peelhill hoard consists of 72 pieces of bronze (fig. 2), of which 24 are small fragments hardly over  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. in length. Some of these fragments can be fitted together to form spearhead sockets (Nos. 7 and 27). There are five intact spearheads (1-5) all of which have been damaged in varying degrees. One of these however is almost perfect (2), and bears little signs of use. Thirteen other spearheads (6-18) are represented more or less completely in the hoard, although all either are in two

<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that wood from spearheads in the hoard from Wilburton Fen, Cambs., has been found by Professor H. Godwin, of the Sub-department of Quaternary Research, Botany School, Cambridge, to be ash, *Fraxinus excelsior*; cf. *Arch.*, XLVIII (1885), 110.

or more pieces, or have been 'bubbled' and twisted by heat, sometimes broken. Ten spearheads have been incorporated in the hoard only as fragments, four sockets (19-22) and six blades (23-28); of these, only one socket (21) might conceivably fit one blade (27) although this is rather doubtful, but there are no other fits possible. The spearhead total in the hoard is therefore 27 or 28. The area around the original find was examined thoroughly and it is very unlikely that other pieces remain undiscovered. Of the remaining objects in the hoard, the spearbutt or ferrule (29) is badly broken, and the sword (31) is in three pieces although otherwise in good condition. One of the breaks seems modern. A small undamaged socketed axe (30) and three rings (32-34) complete the hoard.

Both the character of the hoard's composition, and its physical state, show that this is a scrap-metal hoard, with broken and partly melted objects ready for melting down and recasting. The socketed axe and spearheads 1-3 and 5 are scarcely damaged and might be considered, with possibly the sword, as the personal equipment of the bronze-smith or his collector, although of course we cannot be certain of this. Scrap hoards are relatively rare in Scotland as compared with southern England.<sup>1</sup> Their defining feature is the presence of broken, sometimes methodically broken, objects, often partly melted, and many of such hoards in the south have a great quantity of material.<sup>2</sup> The rarity of such scrap hoards in north Britain and Ireland<sup>3</sup> must point to a different production economy in these areas, in Scotland perhaps an emphasis upon smaller organisations, as shown partly by local styles of objects,<sup>4</sup> a dependence on merchants bringing finished products from the south and west,<sup>5</sup> and a conservatism that did not demand, nor could attain, new types such as were available in the south. For Ireland, Eogan has been able to list only three or four hoards with scrap metal, and in Scotland there are perhaps as many as five, but not more known at present<sup>6</sup>:

	<i>Axes</i>	<i>Swords</i>	<i>Spears</i>	<i>Other</i>
Peelhill	1	1	28	ferrule, 3 rings
Duddingston	0	c. 10	c. 15	bucket staple
Ballimore	8	2	7	tube
Dalduff	10	1	0	cauldron rings
?Gospertie	c. 14	0	c. 7	palstave

This compares unfavourably with the dozens of such hoards in south-eastern England.<sup>7</sup>

The spearheads in the Peelhill hoard are of two main types, one of which can be subdivided. The spearhead with lunate openings in the blade (7) is a type widely distributed over Britain and Ireland, and was present from the Wilburton phase of Late Bronze Age England through the succeeding phases certainly in the north if not in the south.<sup>8</sup> In Scotland such spearheads have been found in associa-

<sup>1</sup> Coles, J. M., 'Scottish Late Bronze Age Metalwork', *P.S.A.S.*, xciii (1959-60), 38.

<sup>2</sup> Britton, D., 'The Isleham Hoard, Cambridgeshire', *Antiquity*, xxxiv (1960), 279, with over 6500 pieces of bronze weighing approximately 200 lb.

<sup>3</sup> Eogan, G., 'The Later Bronze Age in Ireland', *P.P.S.*, xxx (1964), 311.

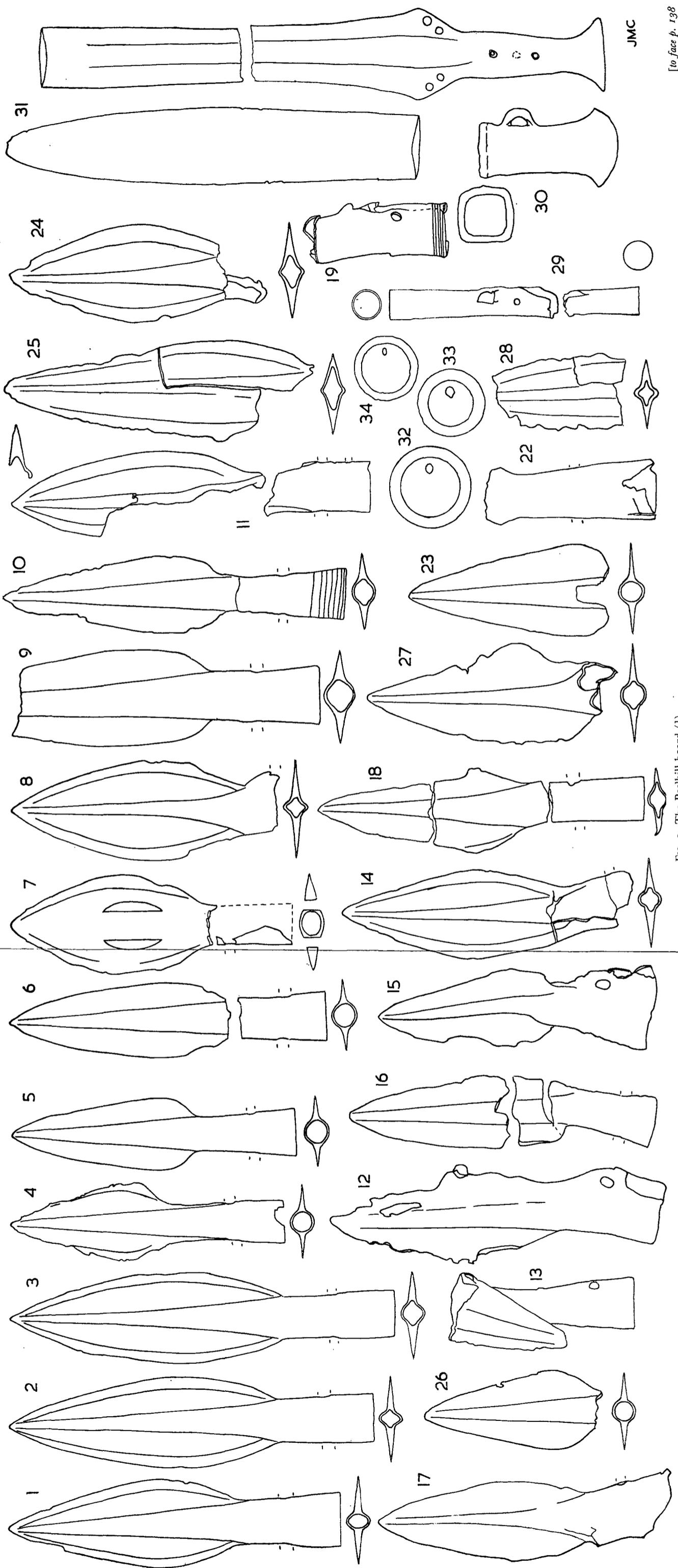
<sup>4</sup> Coles (1960), map 9.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 26 and map 3, 31 and map 4, 33 and map 5.

<sup>6</sup> References in Coles (1960), 94-134.

<sup>7</sup> Evans, J., *Ancient Bronze Implements* (1881), 461-3; British Museum, *Later Prehistoric Antiquities of the British Isles* (1953), 44-45.

<sup>8</sup> Coles (1960), 25; Britton (1960), 280.



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Fig. 2. The Peckhill hoard (1/2)

tion with swords on a number of occasions, principally in the present context and in two other scrap metal hoards.<sup>1</sup> The second type of spearhead at Peelhill is the common Late Bronze Age leaf-bladed variety. As can be seen from the illustrations, there are two main forms, those with normal circular-sectional socket, and those in which the socket expands into the wings of the spearhead (18, 24-25, 28).<sup>2</sup> The latter form is rather restricted in Scotland,<sup>3</sup> but occurs in the Duddingston Loch hoard. It was present in south Britain from the beginning of the Late Bronze Age and through the succeeding centuries.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the grooving on the socket base of two spearheads (10, 19), while uncommon in Scotland,<sup>5</sup> is perhaps better represented in the south, in Late Bronze Age hoards.<sup>6</sup> Such decoration appears on late Middle Bronze Age spearheads.<sup>7</sup> The most interesting feature of the Peelhill spearhead group however is the presence of the thinned socket on three spearheads (1-3) and its suggestion of thinning on others.

This form is rare both in Scotland and in the south, where it is apparently known only from the Newark, Notts, hoard, associated with phalerae-like discs, and dated probably to the seventh century.<sup>8</sup> In Scotland, a spearhead from the Castlehill, Forfar, has a socket slightly thinned, but a leaf-bladed and socket-looped example from Kells, Kirkcudbright, has a strongly reduced socket.<sup>9</sup> The Newark conical discs may represent a local rendering of a continental phalera form, and the socket-thinned spearheads might also represent continental influence, as good examples are known from northern France<sup>10</sup> and from Germany.<sup>11</sup>

The spearbutt ferrule from Peelhill is unique in Scotland, as all the other known ferrules either are conical or have a splayed foot.<sup>12</sup> Tubular ferrules however are well-represented in England, sometimes, as at Peelhill, occurring with lunate spearheads.<sup>13</sup> The form was mainly present in the Wilburton phase in the south, but must have continued in use into the developed Late Bronze Age of north Britain.<sup>14</sup>

The socketed axe is small, with a wide blade and rectangular section. It is closely matched by an axe from Easter Essenside, Selkirk,<sup>15</sup> and belongs to a general north British group of axes<sup>16</sup> believed to have had their inception in the common

<sup>1</sup> Duddingston Loch and Ballimore. The flattened faces of the Peelhill spearhead are matched in the Duddingston hoard.

<sup>2</sup> The saving in metal is of the order of  $\frac{1}{3}$ , on the basis of identically-sized spearheads of both types in the Point of Sleat hoard.

<sup>3</sup> Coles (1960), map 6.

<sup>4</sup> Guilsfield, Montgomeryshire, Grimes, *The Prehistory of Wales* (1951), 258-9; Nottingham, *Inv. Arch.*, GB 22, 12 and 14.

<sup>5</sup> Castlehill, Forfar, Nat. Mus. Ant. Scot. DQ 78; Teviot at Weensland, Hawick Museum.

<sup>6</sup> Thorndon, Suffolk, *Inv. Arch.*, GB 23, 4 and 8; Reach Fen, Cambs., GB 17, 6; Broadward, Hereford, *Arch. Camb.*, 4 ser., III (1872), 345.

<sup>7</sup> Glentroot, Kirkcud., Nat. Mus. Ant. Scot., DQ 239; Panmure, Angus, DG 61.

<sup>8</sup> *Inv. Arch.*, GB 36, note 6, Nos. 3-5, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Nat. Mus. Ant. Scot., DQ 78, and Kirkcudbright Museum 845 resp.

<sup>10</sup> Somme: Breuil, H., 'L'Age du bronze dans le bassin de Paris', *L'Anthropologie*, XIV (1903), 507, figs. 3, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Singen, Baden: Kimmig, W., 'Die Urnenfelderkultur in Baden', *Röm.-Germ. Forsch.*, XIV (1940), taf. 32, A5.

<sup>12</sup> Coles (1960), 24; the Torrs, Glenluce, ferrule should be omitted from this list of Late Bronze Age ferrules, p. 86.

<sup>13</sup> Wilburton: Fox, C., *The Archaeology of the Cambridge Region* (1948), Pl. X; Congleton, *Ant. J.*, VII (1927), 63; Broadward, op. cit.; Isleham, Britton (1960).

<sup>14</sup> It is also known in Ireland, and from N. France, Breuil (1903), 513.

<sup>15</sup> *P. Berw. Nat. Club*, XI (1886), 492.

<sup>16</sup> Coles (1960), 31, map 4.

south British form of rectangular-sectioned axe with double moulding.<sup>1</sup> Some English axes are quite close in form to the Peelhill axe,<sup>2</sup> and in general they fall within the developed Late Bronze Age in Britain.

The Peelhill sword is of the normal Late Bronze Age form in north Britain, called the Ewart Park type,<sup>3</sup> and one which can hardly have appeared in the north before *c.* 800 B.C.<sup>4</sup> The Peelhill sword has a wide-bevelled blade, weakly developed shoulders and six rivet-holes. The closest analogue for this is a sword from Carn Dearg, Muck, but two other Lanarkshire swords are also somewhat similar.<sup>5</sup> The Scottish evidence of association shows that these swords belong to the Duddingston phase or later in the Scottish Late Bronze Age.

Probably to be associated in some way with the sword are the Peelhill rings (32-34). Swords occur with similar rings at Thenford Hill Farm, Northants, and Kelton, Kirkcudbright,<sup>6</sup> and with a larger ring in the former hoard and at Grosvenor Crescent, Edinburgh.<sup>7</sup> Such rings may have served as belt-loops for the attachment of the scabbard.

The evidence of the Peelhill hoard suggests a date of perhaps the seventh or sixth century B.C. for its deposition. This is based upon two aspects. Firstly, the pollen diagrams and discussion by S. E. Durno (Appendix II) show that in all probability the hoard lay in a deposit of Sub-Boreal date (zone VIIIB). The generally accepted lower limit for this is *c.* 500 B.C. Secondly, of the metal objects, the sword can hardly have been produced before the mid-eighth century, for reasons outlined above. The hoard should therefore belong between *c.* 750 and *c.* 500 B.C. As lunate-bladed spearheads and tubular ferrules are generally considered to belong to the Wilburton complex (Late Bronze Age I) in south Britain,<sup>8</sup> i.e. ninth and eighth centuries, this might suggest an early date within the bracket for Peelhill, in an early part of the succeeding (Duddingston) phase in Scotland. Opposed to this is the nature of the hoard, as scrap, suggesting that the types must have had their day of popularity, before consignment to the scrap-heap. Yet if the sword, not burned, is considered as part of the collector's personal equipment, the hoard could be composed of forms basically of Wilburton type where assignable. Taking all into account, a date in the seventh century B.C. is preferred for the hoard's deposition.

It is interesting that each of the four surviving scrap-metal hoards of Scotland contains, in addition to objects that indicate a date in the Duddingston phase,<sup>9</sup> from *c.* 750 B.C., other rather early forms, Peelhill, Duddingston and Ballimore with lunate-bladed spearheads, Peelhill with tubular ferrule as well,<sup>10</sup> and Dalduff with

<sup>1</sup> Shoebury, Essex, *Inv. Arch.*, GB 33, 11-21.

<sup>2</sup> Nottingham, *Inv. Arch.*, GB 22, 9; Shoebury, GB 38, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Cowen, J. D., 'Two Bronze Swords from Ewart Park, Wooler', *Arch. Ael.*, 4 ser., x (1933), 185; for Scotland see Coles, J. M. and Livens, R. G., 'A Bronze Sword from Douglas, Lanarkshire', *P.S.A.S.*, xci (1957-8), 182, and Coles (1960), 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> There are few associated finds that suggest a date anywhere in Britain earlier than *c.* 750 B.C., and those that may be this early are from southern England, the area of the antecedent Wilburton type, e.g., Blackmoor, Hants., Evans (1881), 464, No. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Nat. Mus. Ant. Scot., DL 61, DL 22, DL 14 resp.

<sup>6</sup> *Inv. Arch.*, GB 12, 8 and Nat. Mus. Ant. Scot., DQ 119 resp.

<sup>7</sup> *Inv. Arch.*, GB 12, 9 and Nat. Mus. Ant. Scot., DQ 204 resp.

<sup>8</sup> Britton (1960), 280.

<sup>9</sup> Duddingston bucket, Dalduff cauldron, Peelhill and Ballimore swords.

<sup>10</sup> Of the S. British hoards, that from Broadward, Hereford, is perhaps closest in type-content to Peelhill. Here the lunate spearhead, grooved-base spearhead, tubular ferrule and native sword were found.

a sword of Scandinavian Period IV type. All these in the south of England would suggest a date within the Wilburton phase where scrap hoards first appear. We might therefore be justified in thinking that these Scottish hoards represent an early phase of the 'scrap-hoard economy', perhaps at a time when this form of industrial organisation was first established and expanding in south Britain, i.e. at the beginning of Late Bronze Age 2, which is represented by the Isleham, Cambs, hoard for instance.<sup>1</sup> The Scottish hoards then would represent an attempt to introduce such a commercial approach into north Britain. That such an attempt failed may be inferred by the total absence of scrap hoards containing material demonstrably of later date<sup>2</sup> in north Britain.

## APPENDIX I

### *Report on Pollen and Macro-Samples Collected at Peelhill*

by MRS L. A. TAYLOR

#### THE SITE

The plant remains were lying in a shallow basin on the irregular surface of a large moraine. The hollow was probably a kettle-hole which had become partly filled by a solifluction deposit of sand and gravel. As the till is sandy rather than clayey, this hollow probably became waterlogged only after a rise on the water table and increasing dampness of the climate. The hollow is about 50 ft. above the valley bottom. The surface of the moraine is an exposed position.

#### GENERAL SUCCESSION

The surface of the deposit has been disturbed by ploughing so that the upper layer (C) is discontinuous. Unfortunately no undisturbed Bronze Age remains were found but the ones which we collected appeared to lie in the bottom of the sod turned by the plough. Where the compressed layer C remained it seemed that the plough had slid over the top cutting into the weathered part of layer C. As no objects had turned up in the previous ploughings (at least two) it may be that the plough had been cutting deeper into layer C. If this is so then the Bronze Age remains lay in the layer C.

The succession from the top is as follows:

C—layer of wood, twigs and *Corylus* fruits.

Thin and discontinuous (1-4 in.).

B—Compressed detritus mud with beetle fragments.

Irregularly placed lumps of coarser plant material occur in the upper 7 in.

A—Bedded sand with occasional plant fragments.

#### POSITION OF THE SAMPLES

A pit was dug and the samples (except the macro-sample of layer C) taken from the exposed section. The section started at 0 in. in the soil profile and ended at 1 ft. 2 in. in layer A.

<sup>1</sup> Britton (1960), with Wilburton types and cauldron fragments.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. scrap hoards lacking lunate-bladed spearheads and tubular ferrules, and restricted to normal developed Late Bronze Age forms, including axes and swords and other later material such as regional types of Covesea, Adabrock or Tarves forms, Coles (1960), 54-55.

- Pollen Sample No. 1: 2-3 in. (soil profile)  
 2: 3-4 in.  
 3: 4-5 in. (junction of layers C-B)  
 4: 5-6 in.  
 5: 6-7 in.  
 6: 7-8 in.  
 7: 8-9 in.  
 8: 9-10 in.  
 9: 10-11 in.  
 10: 11-12 in. (junction of layers B-A)  
 11: 12-13 in.  
 12: 13-14 in.

Macro-samples:

- No. 1: 2- 7 in.  
 No. 2: 7-11 in.  
 No. 3: 11-14 in.  
 also one of layer C, 4 ft. from the above section;  
 one of layer B with beetle fragments.

## APPENDIX II

### *Pollen Analysis of Samples from Peelhill*

by S. E. DURNO, B.SC.

Peelhill is one of several Scottish sites of particular archaeological interest from which pollen analysis has shown evidence of the effect of prehistoric agriculture on natural vegetation. Pollen analyses from Dalnaglar, Perthshire,<sup>1</sup> and Monamore, Arran,<sup>2</sup> also show some of the features associated with *Landnam* or primitive land reclamation first described by Iversen (1941).

Pollen analytical evidence from Peelhill is derived from a short profile (14 in.) of peaty material and from scrapings removed from two of a collection of bronze spearheads. Samples representing the profile and from the bronzes were prepared by the acetolysis method (Erdtman, 1943) and the pollen diagram based on counts at each level varying from 100-250 tree pollen grains.

At the base of the pollen diagram (layer A) there is high Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) pollen and low tree pollen - a phase of forest clearance which is clearly temporary as arboreal pollen returns to high values in layer B and Plantain almost disappears. Near the top of the profile (layer C) Plantain reappears and at the same time tree pollen falls sharply indicating a renewal of deforestation (Iversen, 1941). Further evidence is provided by the grasses which strikingly reflect the oscillation between two phases of *Landnam*. Like the grasses, Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) values also fluctuate in the opposite way to those representing the total tree species. This reveals the history of a cycle of vegetational change influenced by the practice of agriculture. In some primitive communities even today the method of 'slash and burn', i.e. clearing areas of forest by felling and burning and using the ground thus reclaimed for cropping, is normal procedure. After a few years when the fertility of the soil is exhausted and it is allowed to revert to natural vegetation a fresh area is reclaimed (Iversen, 1949, 1956). This system of agriculture was probably carried out for a long time in prehistoric Europe and the Peelhill pollen diagram records an episode within this period.

Examination of the arboreal pollen, mainly birch and alder, reveals that it was almost entirely birch which was removed. There seems little doubt that primitive farmers would choose to cultivate the drier soils carrying birchwood and avoid the poorly drained sites bearing alder.

<sup>1</sup> Stewart, 'Excavations at Dalnaglar', *P.S.A.S.*, xcvi (1961-2), 154-7.

<sup>2</sup> Mackie, *P.S.A.S.*, xcvi (1963-4), forthcoming.

Peelhill (AP)

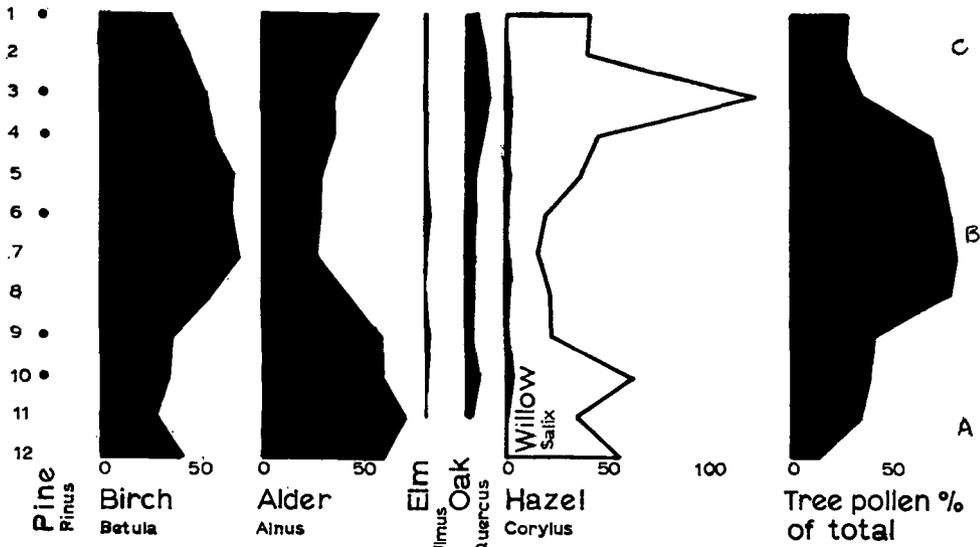


Fig. 3. Arboreal pollen

Peelhill (NAP)

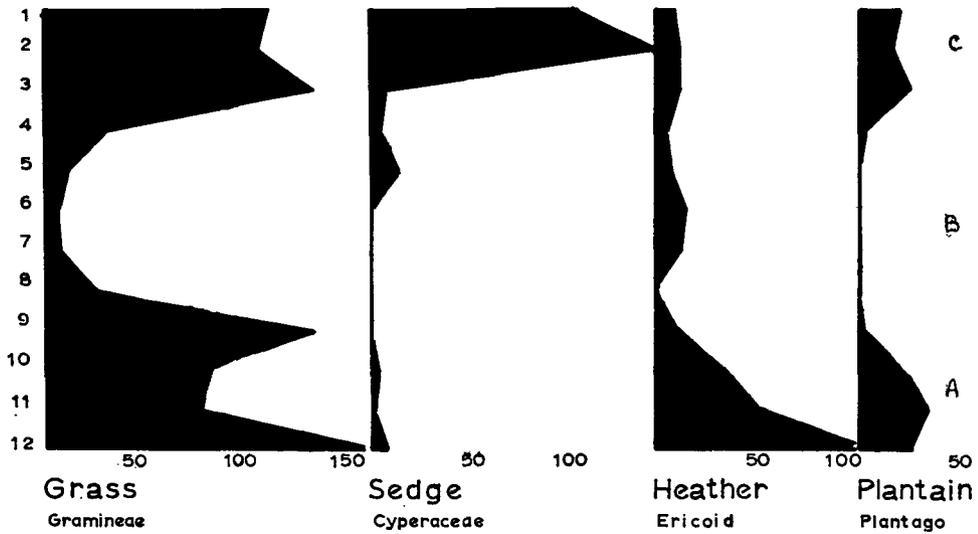


Fig. 4. Non-arboreal pollen

According to Iversen (1956) the Bracken fern (*Pteridium*) was of great importance in the land occupation phase in Denmark as the deep rhizomes are not harmed by fires and in consequence after land clearance it regenerated prolifically. It is interesting to note that spores of Bracken were recorded in three of the four uppermost samples corresponding to the second phase of *Landnam* in the Peelhill diagram.

Scrapings from two bronzes, 11 and 23, were examined and a table of the pollen counts is given below. The high values for Plantain, grasses and certain other herbs indicate an open environment with agriculture. Comparison with the profile diagram suggests that the spearheads had most probably been incorporated in the lower period, layer A, at a time when agricultural activity was at a maximum in the vicinity, although Mrs Taylor thought that the hoard lay in layer C. The evidence suggests that the matrix in which the hoard was found is sub-Boreal (Pollen zone VIIb), 2500-500 B.C. The features of the pollen analysis which lead to this conclusion are: (1) Such high frequency of *Plantago* could scarcely occur before the sub-Boreal. (2) Very high *Gramineae* together with the *Plantago* and certain other species probably indicate agricultural activity. (3) *Ericoid* is low which suggests that the great rise of this group which in many Scottish diagrams occurs in the sub-Atlantic, does not appear in this diagram. This could also be explained by removal of the upper peat for reclamation and cultivation.

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TABLE

## POLLEN CONTENT OF MATERIAL REMOVED FROM SPEARHEADS 11 AND 23

Name of Plant	Spearhead 23		Spearhead 11	
	No. of Pollen Grains	% Total Tree Pollen	No. of Pollen Grains	% Total Tree Pollen
Betula (Birch)	62	31	41	45
Alnus (Alder)	123	61.5	39	43
Pinus (Pine)	1	0.5	4	5
Ulmus (Elm)	2	1.0	2	2
Tilia (Lime)	2	1.0		
Quercus (Oak)	10	5.0	4	5
Corylus (Hazel)	190	95.0	99	110
Ericaceae (Heaths)	69	34.5	55	60
Cyperaceae (Sedges)	8	4.0		
Gramineae (Grasses)	188	94.0	79	88
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i> (Ribwort plantain)	58	29.0	12	15
Other pollen	26	12	12	15
<i>Spores</i>				
Polypodium (Polypody)	13	6.5	4	5
Pteridium (Bracken)	3	1.5		
	Total Tree pollen = 200 Tree pollen % of total = 37		Total Tree pollen = 90 Tree pollen % of total = 26	